DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 032 SO 020 129

AUTHOR Herman, Wayne L., Jr.
TITLE Personal Characteristics of High and Low Rated Elementary School Student Teachers in Social Studies Lessons.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 25p.; For related document, see SO 020 130.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Directed Reading Activity; Elementary Education; *Individual Characteristics; Inquiry; Postsecondary Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Social Studies; *Student Teacher Attitudes; *Student Teacher Evaluation; *Student Teachers; *Student Teaching; Surveys

ABSTRACT

Although student teaching is often recognized as the most influential component of teacher education programs, only a few studies exist outlining what happens to the student teacher in the classroom, or that relate personal characteristics to achievement in student teaching situations. This study, a follow-up of an investigation about the degree of transfer of training for preservice teachers from an elementary social studies methods course to classroom teaching, investigated the differences between nine student teachers who were rated the highest with nine who were rated the lowest in terms of teaching performance. The higher rated student teachers effectively employed the component parts of lessons stressed in method courses and were more apt to employ classroom strategies of inquiry versus directed readings with textbooks. A survey of 31 questions distributed to the participants included the areas of: (1) stability of goals; (2) prized traits for a career job; (3) work experience/hobbies; (4) opinions about education methods courses; (5) preferences for subject area; (6) feelings about teaching; (7) quality of lesson planning during student teaching; and (8) quality of planning of the lesson observed by the researcher. The research that has been conducted on most aspects of student teaching has been limited. If future research could identify the influential factors that cause differing levels of competence among student teachers with the same training, it is possible that some kind of intervention might have salutary effects in improving teacher competence. Ten references and one table of data are included. (PPB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED310032

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH AND LOW RATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT TEACHERS IN SOCIAL STUDIES LESSONS

Wayne L. Herman, Jr.
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
WAYNE L. HERMAN
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SO 020 129

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH AND LOW RATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT TEACHERS IN SOCIAL STUDIES LESSONS

By Wayne L. Herman, Jr.
University of Maryland, College Park

What accounts for disparities among student teachers' performance after they have had the same training? Although student teaching is often recognized as the most influential component of a teacher education program, Davies and Amershek (1969) concluded that only a few studies exist of what happens to the student teacher in the classroom. Yet many educators believe that student teaching ought to provide opportunities for practicing skills learned in campus methods courses. Salzillo and Van Fleet (1977) questioned whether or not any investigation of student teaching has shown conclusively that it has any unique educational component other than assimilation of the role of teacher in the school.

If Salzillo and Van Fleet are correct in their thesis, a possible cause of absent or weak teaching strategies in student teaching might be that teacher training courses fail to employ what Peck and Tucker (1973) describe as a systems approach to training, i.e., behavioral objectives, procedures aimed at achieving the objectives, and measurement and feedback to learners. They state that some research indicates that a systems approach that directly involves pre-service teachers in the teacher's role through close approximations such as sensitivity-training laboratories or classroom simulation laboratories produce the desired teacher behavior more than

lectures or remote activities. Another logical reason is that training of teachers and student teaching are conducted by two related but different educational systems.

Although Seperson and Joyce (1973) found, as many have thought, that student teachers adopt the teaching style of their cooperating teacher, Zeichner (1978) submits that it is unknown whether cooperating teachers are affecting student teachers in desirable ways or in fact reinforcing practices taught in the methods courses. Yet Hodges (1982) found that student teachers without cooperating teachers often acted in ways dissonant with views they expressed immediately after taking a reading course.

Do certain teacher characteristics predict teacher performance? McNergney and Satterstrom (1984) found weak relationships between elementary school student teachers' performance and factors of age, scholastic aptitude, attitudes, moral reasoning, conceptual development, and ego development.

What criteria are student teachers rated on? Hattie, Olphert, and Cole (1982) found that cooperating teachers rated primary and secondary school student teachers on the two major factors of preparation and presentation, e.g., whether the material is well sequenced and within pupils' ability, whether the student teacher can get and maintain pupils' attention, and whether they clearly demonstrate what they are teaching. No mention was made of teaching methods supposedly taught in methods courses.

At the present time the research literature offers few clues to differentiate student teaching performance. State mandated performance standards for beginning teachers is a current thrust, and the reader is advised to consult Woolever (1985) who explores ways to insure that training institutions will produce quality teachers.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

This study is a follow-up of an investigation concerning the degree of transfer of training for pre-service teachers in the elementary social studies methods course on campus to student teaching. The initial study involved thirty-two student teachers in comparable middle class schools in two Maryland counties which had teacher education centers with a full-time coordinator; they selected one of three lessons for observation: a directed reading lesson using a social studies textbook, a classroom discussion of a controversial issue or current event, and an inquiry lesson (Herman and Schaefer, 1985).

During the observed lessons the thirty-two student teachers were rated on about 25 component lesson parts, from 0 (not observed) to 4 (high) by the researcher. The three different lessons were taught across grade levels 1-6 with different topical content. While this condition suggests action research as opposed to an experimental study, some researchers believe a study is strengthened when treatments are held constant across

various grade levels with differing content. Table 1 indicates the distribution of successful and unsuccessful student teachers according to grade level and treatments.

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

All lessons had been taught in a methods course characterized by those elements that the research literature indicated were supportive of transfer of training: behavioral objectives, foundational teaching competencies, teacher demonstration, and student practice of these competencies in peer teaching and simulation activities such as prototypes, protocols, and role-playing (Peck and Tucker, 1973).

This investigation attempted to tease out differences between nine student teachers in the initial study who were rated highest and those nine student teachers with the poorest or unacceptable teaching performance. The nine successful student teachers' mean grade point average was 3.2 with a median of 3.0, and a range of 2.75-4.0 while the unsuccessful student teachers' mean grade point average was 2.7 with a median of 2.8 and a range of 2.14-3.15.

For the lessons observed by the researcher, the successful student teachers had an average group rating of 3.7 for all components of their lessons while the unsuccessful student teachers achieved only an average group rating of 1.3

In the initial study, the major differences between the nine successful and nine unsuccessful student teachers were summarized as follows:

1. The highly successful student teachers employed effectively the component parts of the lessons as stressed in the methods course on campus whereas the unsuccessful student teachers omitted many of the significant elements of selected lessons.
2. Five of the nine successful student teachers selected the strategy of inquiry, a relatively litte used classroom strategy, while five of the nine unsuccessful student teachers selected the often used classroom strategy of a directed reading activity employing a social studies textbook.

THE SURVEY

In a discreet attempt to ascertain the differences between the nine highly successful student teachers and the lowest or unsuccessful student teachers, a printed survey was distributed to these eighteen student teachers near the conclusion of their student teaching. The survey form included 31 questions or about four questions concerning each of the following areas: (1) stability of teaching goals; (2) prized traits for a career job; (3) background of jobs and associations before college graduation; (4) personal opinion of the methods courses and instructors; (5) preference for a subject area; (6) opinions

about teaching and obtaining a teaching position; (7) quality of lesson planning during student teaching; and (8) quality of planning of the lesson which the researcher observed.

A. STABILITY OF GOALS

1. How often did you change majors?

   Of the successful student teachers, four never changed majors, four changed once, and one switched twice. Concerning unsuccessful student teachers, three never changed majors, four switched one time, and two switched twice.

2. The best career job that you can think of:

   Three of the successful student teachers mentioned teaching, while the others named psychologist, physician, manager, professional horseman. Of the unsuccessful student teachers, six mentioned teaching while medicine, law, and chief executive officer each got named once.

3. The worst career job that I can think of:

   Six of nine successful student teachers chose fields unrelated to people while seven of nine of the unsuccessful teachers selected fields not associated with people.

4. In newspapers and magazines I like to read about people in jobs involving (don't mention teaching):

   Eleven out of thirteen responses for successful teachers dealt with people oriented jobs like service jobs,

entertainment, and public relations; the unsuccessful student teachers gave nearly the same responses.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT STABILITY OF TEACHING GOALS: No conclusions can be drawn from the data to differentiate successful from unsuccessful student teachers.

B. PRIZED TRAITS FOR A CAREER JOB

5. The conditions or circumstances desired in a career job: Three successful student teachers mentioned good relationships with co-workers, and three others mentioned "able to innovate my own ideas" or "try out new ideas." Two successful teachers mentioned "good pay" and "a job that doesn't come home with me." Other conditions mentioned once were "materials available," "excitement," "variety," "feeling useful," "lots of activity." The unsuccessful teachers mentioned similar items.

6. The conditions or circumstances not desired in a career job. Most of the successful student teachers mentioned desk jobs, jobs with excessive paperwork, unfriendly work relations, and long, long hours. Unsuccessful teachers named boredom, low pay, job frustration, and an unmotivated, disharmonious staff.

7. If I were an employment manager, two important personal attributes of job applicants would be:

   Popular attributes named by successful student teachers included intelligence, self-confidence, communication skills, professionalism and sincerity while unsuccessful student teachers selected enthusiasm, serious awareness of job responsibilities, sociability, and sincerity.

8. If I were an employment manager, I would not hire job applicants who displayed these personal attributes:

   Successful student teachers named lack of professionalism, lack of communication skills, overconfidence, unorganized, sarcasm, improper dress, poor hygiene, and tardiness. Unsuccessful teachers mentioned lackadasical attitude, inflexibility, poor interpersonal skills, not dependable, arrogance, and sloppiness.

CONCLUSION ABOUT PRIZED TRAITS FOR A CAREER JOB: No conclusions can be made that differentiate successful from unsuccessful student teachers.

C. WORK EXPERIENCE/HOBBIES

9. Jobs before college entry:

   Of the twenty-one jobs mentioned by successful student teachers, eighteen were involved directly with people, such as waitress (4), camp counselor (4), and sales clerk (2).

Twenty-one out of twenty-five jobs mentioned by the unsuccessful student teachers entailed relationships with people, such as waitress (4), bank teller (2), teacher's aide (2), sales clerk (2), and baby sitter (2).

10. Jobs during college:

Twenty-seven different activities were named by successful student teachers, of which eight involved sports, four included reading, three each for cultural activities and people-oriented activities (like talking with friends), and watching television was mentioned by two teachers. The unsuccessful teachers mentioned twenty-one different activities which included sports (10), talking to friends/family (6), reading (6), cultural activities (3).

11. Major summer activities while in college:

Of the 35 responses given by successful student teachers, thirteen involved sporting activities, eleven dealt with jobs mostly related to people, five included reading or studying, and six involved visiting friends, vacationing or travelling. The unsuccessful student teachers gave 28 responses divided among jobs (6), reading and studying (5), sports (5), and miscellaneous such as travel (5), visiting friends (3), watching TV/movies (4).

12. Leisure time activities:

Successful student teachers gave 32 responses distributed among sports (12), people related activities like talking with friends and dancing (8), attending plays, movies, or watching television (6), reading (4), arts and crafts (2). Unsuccessful student teachers gave 33 responses: sports (10), people related activities (6), reading (6), watching television or movies (5), travelling (3), and miscellaneous (3).

CONCLUSION ABOUT BACKGROUND OF JOBS/ACTIVITIES BEFORE COLLEGE GRADUATION: No conclusions can be made that differentiate successful from unsuccessful teachers.

D. OPINIONS ABOUT EDUCATION METHODS COURSES

13. Two of the best ideas I learned from the methods courses:

Successful student teachers mentioned fifteen different ideas involving lesson execution (8), individual differences (3), and lesson planning (2). Unsuccessful student teachers mentioned thirteen different ideas which included the directed reading lesson (2), ways to be creative (2), lesson planning (2), execution of lessons (2), and how to teach concepts (2).

14. Education courses could be improved if:

Seventeen criticisms by successful student teachers were divided among professors (12), programs (3), and materials 1). Criticisms of professors included the "need for higher standards," "less repetition," "clearer methods," "more application to classroom," "less lecture," "less theory," and "more practical strategies." The unsuccessful student teachers named ten criticisms of which four were directd at professors, criticism of program was named four times, and materials received one criticism.

15. Adjectives that describe my education professors as a collective group:

Of thirty-one responses from successful student teachers, all but two were positive traits of character or teaching expertise. For the unsuccessful student teachers, of thirty-two adjectives named, all but four were positive traits.

CONCLUSION ABOUT OPINIONS CONCERNING METHODS COURSES: No conclusions can be made that differentiate successful from unsuccessful student teachers.

E. PREFERENCES FOR SUBJECT AREA

16. Subject areas that I like to read about are:

Successful student teachers mentioned adventure (2), romance (2), history (2), sports (2), mysteries (2), current events (2), and stories about people (2), personal triumphs, realistic events, government, science fiction, language arts, and arts/crafts, or a total of 20 responses. Unsuccessful student teachers named the same variety of subject areas, or a total of 16 responses.

17. Subject areas that I avoid reading about are:

Successful student teachers named science/technical (3), people arguments or wars (2), statistics/math (2), politics (2), and economics (2), or a total of 11 responses. Unsuccessful student teachers listed classified section (3), business (3), science (2), gossip, self-help, fashion, wars, history, mysteries, or a total of 14 responses.

18. The subject that I like to teach the most:

Successful student teachers named language arts (5), science (2), math (2), reading, social studies. Unsuccessful student teachers selected science (2), math (2), social studies, math, literature, spelling, reading, and creative writing.

19. The subject I like to teach the least:
Successful student teachers selected science (4), math (2), language arts, social studies, and spelling. Unsuccessful student teachers chose science (3), math (3), social studies, spelling, and reading.

CONCLUSION ABOUT PREFERENCES FOR SUBJECT AREAS: No conclusions can be made that differentiate successful from unsuccessful student teachers.

F. FEELINGS ABOUT TEACHING

20. The most positive thing I can say about teaching:
Successful student teachers mentioned the satisfaction of teaching children (5), the important role of teaching in U.S.A. (2), "teaching is changing and growing," "never a dull moment." Unsuccessful student teachers named satisfaction in working with children or seeing them learn (7), teaching makes a significant contribution to our culture (2).

21. The most negative thing I can say about teaching:
Successful student teachers listed low salary (4), teaching is not recognized by community as important (2), too much paperwork, lack of freedom in the curriculum, and "teachers don't always listen carefully to what pupils say." Unsuccessful student teachers named low salary (3),

profession sells self short, too much paperwork (2), not enough recognition for teachers, pupils don't apply selves, not being able to get through to all pupils.

22. Who or what influenced you to major in teacher education?
Successful student teachers named work experiences with children (4), teachers (3), and family member (2). Unsuccessful student teachers mentioned work experiences with children (3), own personal interests (3), family members (2), and teacher.

23. Status in looking for teaching position:
Five successful student teachers had been offered a teaching position, three indicated they were strongly searching for a teaching position, and one indicated if a good non-teaching position came along, it would be taken. Of the unsuccessful student teachers, only one had been offered a teaching position, five were strongly searching for one, two would take a good non-teaching job if offered, and two were not actively looking for a teaching position.

CONCLUSION ABOUT OPINIONS, INFLUENCE, AND STATUS CONCERNING TEACHER EDUCATION: More successful student teachers (5 out of 9) than unsuccessful student teachers had been offered a teaching position at the end of student teaching. Only one unsuccessful student teacher had been offered a position.

G. TEACHING DURING STUDENT TEACHING

24. I usually consult the following sources in preparing a lesson:

Successful student teachers responded with a total of nineteen items distributed over textbook (6), curriculum guides (4), other professionals (2), audio-visuals (2), college notes, my mind, methods textbook, content resources, and pupils. Unsuccessful student teachers gave a total of nineteen responses divided among textbook (6), library (4), curriculum guides (3), college notes (2), teacher's manual (2), college methods textbook, and available materials.

25. In preparing a lesson, I think about these things:

Successful student teachers listed some aspects of pupils such as pupil involvement or making content interesting to pupils (18), some aspects of the lesson such as objectives, content, or culminating activity (5), materials and miscellaneous (7), or a total of 30 responses. Unsuccessful student teachers listed various aspects of the lesson (15), consideration of the pupils (7), materials (5), and miscellaneous (2), or a total of 29 responses.

26. When teaching full-time during student teaching, I spent about ? minutes a week-day night planning lessons:

Successful student teachers spent an average of 103 minutes a week-day night planning lessons, with a median of 120

minutes and a range of 30-180 minutes. The five successful student teachers who had been offered a teaching position at the conclusion of student teaching (see question 23) spent the most time planning lessons, between 120-180 minutes a week-day night. The unsuccessful student teachers spent an average of 108 minutes per week-day night planning lessons, with a median of 105 minutes and a range of 60-240 minutes. Only one of these was offered a teaching position; she spent 120 minutes per week-day night planning lessons.

27. When teaching full-time during student teaching, I spent about ? minutes a week-day night correcting pupils' papers. Successful student teachers spent an average of 64 minutes correcting pupils' papers on week-day nights, with a median of 60 minutes and a range of 15-150 minutes. Again, the five highest times were by the five student teachers offered a position. Unsuccessful student teachers spent an average of 74 minutes correcting pupils' papers on week-day nights, with a median of 60 minutes and a range of 45-120 minutes. The student teacher with the highest time of 120 minutes was also the one who had been offered a teaching position.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PREPARATION AND PLANNING OF LESSONS AND TIME SPENT AT HOME ENGAGED IN PLANNING LESSONS/CORRECTING PAPERS: In their planning of lessons, successful student teachers mentioned considerations of the learners more than twice as often as unsuccessful student teachers (17:7); unsuccessful student

teachers mentioned various aspects of the lesson three times more than successful students teachers (15:5). Moreover, of the successful student teachers, those with the longest times spent in planning lessons and correcting papers at home received offers of teaching positions.

H. THE RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION

28. My planning of the lesson for the researcher's observation involved?

Of the 25 responses given by successful student teachers, 16 involved the methodology of teaching and 9 entailed content selection or study. Of the 24 responses mentioned by unsuccessful student teachers, 13 concerned the methodology of teaching and 7 involved study/selection of content.

29. What was the major influence in your planning of the lesson which the research observed?

Successful student teachers mentioned social studies methods course notes (4), cooperating teacher (3), pupils' textbook (2), curriculum guide (1), and content book (1).
Unsuccessful student teachers named pupils' textbook (3), cooperating teacher (3), social studies methods course notes (2), and friend (1).

30. I spent ? minutes planning the lesson observed by the researcher.

Successful student teachers averaged 60 minutes, a median of 30 minutes and a range of 20-180 minutes. Four of the five offered teaching positions spent 30 minutes or less. Unsuccessful student teachers averaged 93 minutes, a median of 90 minutes and a range of 30-180 minutes.

31. My cooperating teacher or other person assisted me in planning the lesson observed by the researcher:

Successful student teachers answered:
Much help (1), Some help (2), No help (6)
Unsuccessful student teachers answered:
Much help (0), Some help (5), No help (4).

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE OBSERVATION: Unsuccessful student teachers needed more time to prepare a lesson for the researcher than successful student teachers. More than twice as many unsuccessful student teachers were assisted by their cooperating teachers for the researcher's observation as were successful teachers (5:2).

DISCUSSION

This investigation of nine successful and nine unsuccessful student teachers in elementary school social studies revealed striking similarities between the two groups in areas concerning

stability of teaching goals, prized traits for a career job, background of jobs before college graduation, personal opinion of the methods courses and instructors, and preference for a subject.

Significant differences between the two groups were noted regarding the offer of a teaching position at the conclusion of student teaching, the quality and quantity of lesson planning and correcting pupils' papers, planning time spent, and cooperating teacher assistance with the lesson observed by the researcher.

It is recognized that the labeling of successful and unsuccessful student teachers in this study resulted from only one teaching lesson in social studies education; and this fact alone, while instructive in the initial study on transfer of training, is hardly a sufficient exposure to draw a sound conclusion on the differences between groups. Indeed, inspection of the evaluative reports on both successful and unsuccessful student teachers in this study by cooperating teachers and center coordinators yielded data which indicated that all were highly regarded in their teaching competence.

As described earlier, five successful student teachers chose the inquiry lesson and five unsuccessful student teachers chose the directed reading lesson. It is possible that the relatively little used inquiry lessons by classroom teachers compelled the successful teachers to rely on their social studies methods course notes whereas the commonly employed directed reading

activity resulted in student teachers emulating unacceptable teaching methods by their cooperating teachers.

The research is indeed thin on most aspects of student teaching. If we knew the influential factors that cause differing levels of competence among student teachers with the same training, it is possible that some kind of intervention might have salutory effects in improving teacher competence. This investigation is only seminal in that direction.

REFERENCES

Davies, D. and Amershek, K., "Student Teaching," in R. Ebel (Editor), The Encyclopedia of Educational Research, New York: Macmillan, 1969, p. 1384.

Hattie, J., Olphert, W., and Cole, B., "Assessment of Student Teachers by Supervising Teachers," Journal of Educational Psychology, 74 (October 1982), 778-785.

Herman, Wayne L., Jr. and Schafer, William, "From the Campus to Student Teaching: Transfer of Training in Elementary School Social Studies," 1984, Mimeograph.

Hodges, Carl, "Implementing Methods: If You Can't Blame the Cooperating Teacher Who Can You Blame," Journal of Teacher Education, 32 (November/December 1982), 25-29.

Seperson, M. and Joyce, B. "Teaching Styles of Student Teachers as Related to Those of Their Cooperating Teachers," Educational Leadership, (Research Supplement), 31 (November 1973), 146-151.

McNergney, Robert and Satterstrom, Lyn, "Teacher Characteristics and Teacher Performance," Contemporary Educational Psychology, 9 (January 1984), 19-24.

Peck, Robert F., and Tucker, James A., "Research on Teacher Education," in Robert M. W. Travers, Editor, Second Handbook of Research on Teaching, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973, Chapter 30.

Salzillo, R., and Van Fleet, A., "Student Teaching and Teacher Education: A Sociological Model for Change," Journal of Teacher Education, 28 (January/February 1977), 27-31.

Woolever, Roberta, "State Mandated Performance Evaluation of Beginning Teachers: Implications for Teacher Educators," Journal of Teacher Education, 36 (March/April 1985), 22-25.

Zeichner, K. M., "The Student Teaching Experience," Action in Teacher Education, 1 (1978), 56-61.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENT TEACHERS TO GRADE LEVELS ACCORDING TO OBSERVED LESSON

	Directed Reading Activity			Discussion of Controversial Issue/ Current Event			Inquiry		
	S*	U*	(TT)	S	U	(TT)	S	U	(TT)
Grade 1			(1)	1		(0)	1		(1)
Grade 2			(2)		1	(3)	1	1	(2)
Grade 3		3	(1)	1		(3)	1	1	(0)
Grade 4			(2)			(5)	1		(2)
Grade 5	1	2	(3)	1		(5)	1		(1)
Grade 6			(0)		1	(1)			(0)
Total	1	5	(9)	3	2	(17)	5	2	(6)

*S = Successful
*U = Unsuccessful
(TT) = Distribution of 32 student teachers in initial study of transfer of training